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LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT IN CENTRAL
AMERICA--TRAINING IMPLICATIONS FOR
THE U.S. ARMY

A Monograph

by

Lieutenant Colonel Jimmie F. Holt

Infantry



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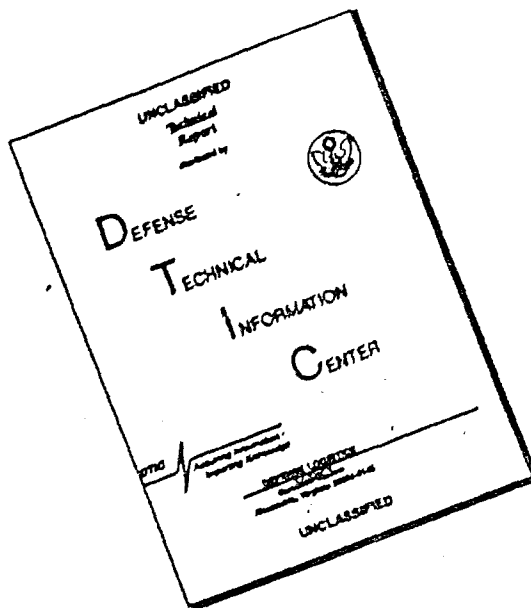
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Nicaragua, is an entrenched Marxist government on the North American continent for the first time in history.

The battle for American's rear area is taking place today in Central America. Some in the U.S. Army have recognized this fact and indeed, some measures have been taken to stabilize the area. However, the Army's firepower attrition mindset leaps to an attempt to solve the problem by infusion of large scale capital items such as helicopters, gunships and large artillery. The potential is to handicap U.S. allies and position them for slow strangulation and ultimate failure as in South Vietnam.

The starting point is in leader education. The Army institutional school system will need to refocus to provide emphasis commensurate with the threat. The mindset of the Army must be refocused through guerrilla oriented training to think mobility and destruction of the enemy's means to resist and his will to fight rather than simply firepower and attrition.

The alternatives are clear, continue to focus scarce training and resources on Central Europe where there can never be adequate numbers available to preclude the use of nuclear weapons or refocus training and resources to assisting allies to combat insurgencies. The consequences of the wrong choice now may be considerably more costly in terms of manpower and resources to defend the U.S. Southern border later.

Low Intensity Conflict in Central America--
Training Implications for the U.S. Army

by

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ABSTRACT

LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT IN CENTRAL AMERICA: TRAINING IMPLICATIONS FOR THE U.S. ARMY By LTC Jimmie F. Holt, USA, 51 Pages.

JCS Pub 2 charges all services to "prepare for war and operations short of war". The U.S. Army has further defined operations short of war as military involvement in low intensity conflict. While the Army has made some effort at improving its capability in low intensity conflict, it is clear that preparation for war in Central Europe is the dominant priority and has been since the U.S. defeat in Vietnam. The U.S. Army at that time focused its efforts on Central Europe where its management expertise and firepower oriented organization could be justified. In the process, it relegated operations short of war to the fringes of the institution. This view of mechanical, capital intensive operations will fail us in Europe if we ever fight there. In the meantime it is leading us to failure in Low Intensity Conflict and Operations Short of War.

The Soviets have been quick to take advantage of the opportunity in Central America presented by U.S. focus on Europe. The successful Cuban revolution by insurgency has been constantly improved through trial and error and Soviet logistical support. The result in Nicaragua, is an entrenched Marxist government on the North American continent for the first time in history.

The battle for America's rear area is taking place today in Central America. Some in the U.S. Army have recognized this fact and indeed, some measures have been taken to stabilize the area. However, the Army's firepower-attribution oriented mindset attempts to solve the problem by infusion of large scale capital items such as helicopters, gunships, and large artillery. The potential is to handicap U.S. allies and position them for slow strangulation and ultimate failure as in South Vietnam.

The starting point in correcting this tendency is in leader education. The Army institutional school system will need to refocus to provide emphasis commensurate with the threat. The Army's leaders and soldiers must be refocused through guerrilla oriented training to think mobility and destruction of the enemy's means to resist and his will to fight rather than simply firepower and attrition.

The alternatives are clear, we can continue to focus scarce training and resources on Central Europe where there can never be adequate numbers available to preclude the use of nuclear weapons or we can refocus training and resources to assisting allies to combat insurgencies. The consequences of the wrong choice now may be considerably more costly in terms of manpower and resources to defend the U.S. Southern border later.

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Table of Contents

	page
I. Introduction.....	1
II. National Interests, Objectives, and Strategy.....	6
III. U.S. Army Involvement in Low Intensity Conflict.....	11
IV. Low Intensity Conflict in the Caribbean Basin.....	15
V. The Insurgent Model in Central America.....	22
VI. Training to Combat Insurgency.....	31
VII. Conclusions.....	37
Maps and Charts	
1. Global Missions for Army Forces.....	40
2. Central America and the Caribbean Locations and relative distances.....	41
3. The Spectrum of Conflict.....	42
4. Importance of the Caribbean Basin to U.S. economics and security.....	43
Endnotes.....	44
Bibliography.....	48

SECTION I Introduction

We still persist in studying a type of warfare that no longer exists and that we shall never fight again, while we pay only passing attention to the war we lost in Indochina and the one we are about to lose in Algeria. Yet the abandonment of Indochina or of Algeria is just as important for France as would be the loss of a metropolitan province.

The result of this shortcoming is that the army is not prepared to confront an adversary employing arms and methods the army itself ignores. It has, therefore, no chance of winning...

Our military machine reminds one of a pile driver attempting to crush a fly, indefatigably persisting in repeating its efforts.

The inability of the army to adapt itself to changed circumstances has heavy consequences. It gives credence to the belief that our adversaries, who represent only weak forces, are invincible and that, sooner or later, we shall have to accept their conditions for peace. It encourages the diffusion of dangerously erroneous ideas which eventually become generally accepted.¹

Colonel Roger Trinquier
Modern Warfare

Since the Second World War, the U.S. national strategy as defined in national security objectives has dramatically changed. This change is the result of several factors including national and international political, military, and fiscal realities.

Today, no country is immune to hostilities simply because of geographical location or stratification of its many elements of national power. Some of the trends which have contributed to this situation are:

1. The increasing availability of modern conventional arms and weapons to virtually all nations and groups.
2. The spread of nuclear technology to increasing numbers of nations of the world.

3. Increasing international competition for raw materials and expendable resources.

4. World population growth, particularly in the Third World.

5. Increased regional political, social, and economic instability.

These trends have made it more difficult to distinguish the intent of many nations in the world. Thus, the potential threat to U.S. interests has increased.

The Army, as a strategic force, deters war and operations short of war by maintaining forces with substantial and varied capabilities to meet U.S. global military requirements. The Army's worldwide commitment consists of maintaining forward deployed forces geared to specific geographical threats and general purpose forces which can be tailored to meet other foreseeable requirements for applications of land force power.²

C.H. Builder, in a work entitled, "On the Army's Concept of War" says, "Moreover, how the services perceive the next major war they must fight is an important determinant of the types of forces they try to acquire and of the doctrine and training they develop for the use of those forces in combat."³ The U.S. Army, for a number of reasons, including the fact that a threat to Central Europe permits the maintenance of maximum numbers of forces with a balanced combat arms emphasis, is focused on preparation for war in Europe with the Soviets. Such a war would by its nature, be characterized by large numbers of mechanized weapons including tanks, helicopters, and gunships. This mechanical, capital intensive focus has permeated every facet of Army thinking. The result is a mindset that will fail us in Europe if we

ever fight there. In the meantime, it is leading us to failure in low intensity conflict and operations short of war. If the American military experience since World War II has produced any lesson for the future, it is that the next major war probably will not resemble the scenarios which now dominate Army thinking.

General war with the Soviet Union is universally considered the most dangerous threat to the existence of the United States. This can reasonably be expected to remain true for the foreseeable future. However, military operations short of war and low intensity conflict in diverse locations world-wide will continue to be the most likely, and perhaps the most serious threats to U.S. national interests.

The Korean and Vietnamese War experiences show that the Army, much more than its sister services, can not afford to prepare for the wrong war; it simply does not enjoy freedom of choice in time, location, and instruments for coming to grips with the enemy. The U.S. Army is deployed to fight in a variety of other places, but the mindset behind the design of the Army in its equipment and doctrine, is most clearly oriented toward a Central European conventional war. Chart One lists the current missions of U.S. Army forces.

The Soviets can be expected to maintain pressure on the U.S. and its allies in Europe. At the same time, they will challenge American commitment and resolve to prevent expansion of Soviet influence in Third World nations. Wars under such conditions are not subject to deterrence through the preparedness of the U.S. Army to intervene, but their outcomes can be determined by its ability to intervene effectively.

There is justifiable doubt that the U.S. Army can do more than assist in bringing about a stalemate in Europe. However, there is little doubt that failure to prepare for low intensity conflicts can be devastating to U.S. interests including its border to the South. C. H. Builder says, "If the Army oriented itself toward such a possibility, it could probably be quite effective in meeting both its military objectives and the public's expectations." 5

It may well be that the most significant test of national will between the U.S. and the Soviet Union is taking place now in Central America -- an isthmus containing five small countries with a combined population of less than 25 million people, but located closer to the U.S. capitol than significant parts of the United States itself. Chart Two shows some representative distances between the United States, Central America, and the Caribbean Basin.

In the years prior to its involvement in Vietnam, the U.S. Army developed and implemented an effective counter insurgency doctrine. Forces were specifically trained and able to assist allies in such operations. However, with the shift to a firepower-attrition orientation in Vietnam, the U.S. Army lost sight of the strategic aim necessary to win in revolutionary wars or low intensity conflict--the elimination of the guerrilla base of support and will to fight.

During the course of this paper the relationship of American national security and the U.S. Army will be explored. The Central America experience will be used to define the nature of operations short of war. The Army's potential contribution to U.S. national security objectives in low intensity conflict will be analyzed in terms of

counterinsurgency operations in Central America and the Caribbean Basin. Emphasis will be placed on the period since Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba, in 1959. The objective will be to emphasize that specific training requirements are necessary for an Army to perform its mission successfully in low intensity conflicts. Conclusions will be drawn as to the necessary change of training for the U.S. Army to operate effectively in such an environment. Finally, the implications of such a restructured training emphasis for the Army will be emphasized.

In an environment where operations short of war are the norm, the U.S. Army must ask itself whether or not it is organized, structured, equipped, and trained to perform effectively in that area. Since organization, structure, and equipment require substantial financial outlays and Congressional support, training appears to be the area in which the Army has the greatest flexibility to prepare for its most likely challenge. Training for low intensity conflict will be the focus of this paper.

SECTION II

National Interests, Objectives, and Strategy

...the assertion that a major military development, or the plan for one, should be a matter for purely military opinion is unacceptable and can be damaging. Nor indeed is it sensible to summon soldiers as many governments do when they are planning a war, and ask them for purely military advice.⁷

Carl Von Clausewitz
On War

U.S. national interests, security objectives, and the strategy to achieve them require military forces for effective implementation. The U.S. Army, with the essence of its strength being the American soldier, is the clearest demonstration of the nation's resolve and commitment. With the pace of change as it is, military decisions that support the national interests, objectives or strategy must not be made in a vacuum.

We live in rapidly changing times, and most observers predict that the rate of change will continue to accelerate. Thus, it is predictable that challenges to the national interests of the United States will multiply and that the nation's resolve will be tested repeatedly. Managing the uncertainties which accompany rapid change and meeting the security challenges are tremendous tasks for national planners.

Army decision makers have a particularly difficult task ahead to ensure that the United States has a credible ground force able to support the nation's global military strategy. One must remember that Germany in WWII won the Battle of France but lost the Battle of Britain--and ultimately the war. She won the battle for which she prepared and lost the one for which she had not. French military doctrine, in addition to being defensive and stagnant, was not fully integrated with the national political strategy. Barry Posen, in his book, The Sources of Military Doctrine, described the prevailing French

military doctrine and its underlying national thought prior to World II when he said, "Both operationally and politically, it looked backward to World War I."⁸ Thus, for the statesman who defines the national strategy and the soldier who is charged with implementing it, the consequences of misunderstanding changing realities can be disastrous.

The United States has a national strategy -- a number of directives signed by the President and a body of thought that supports them -- whose purpose is to guide policy makers, civilian and military, in carrying out American worldwide responsibilities. Admiral Trost described the basis of American strategy as follows: "U.S. national strategy has consistently rested on three basic pillars: deterrence, forward defense, and allied solidarity."⁹ Obviously, U.S. strategy to prevent general war has been successful. Success has been based on the adversary's perception of U.S. strength and resolve. While U.S. strategy aims to deter general war, it is also designed to control crisis and to support its allies. This requires a forward presence such as troop units permanently stationed in Europe and Korea and ships patrolling in international waters.

The Department of Defense exists to fulfill the national government's first obligation: to secure national survival and independence. Frank Carlucci, the Secretary of Defense, summarized the mission of his department as follows: "Our mission is to preserve America's freedom and to secure its vital interests, creating an environment that allows our nation to prosper."¹⁰ U.S. national security interests are derived from broadly held values such as freedom, human rights and economic prosperity. These values serve to define

specific interests and their associated geographic concerns.

Specifically, the current national security objectives of the United States are:

1. To safeguard the United States, its allies and interests by deterring aggression and coercion; and should deterrence fail, by defeating armed aggression and ending the conflict on terms favorable to the U.S., its allies and interests at the lowest possible level of hostilities;
2. To encourage and assist our allies and friends in defending themselves against aggression, coercion, subversion, insurgencies and terrorism;
3. To ensure U.S. access to critical resources, markets, the oceans and space.
4. To reduce, where possible, Soviet military presence throughout the world, increase the costs of Moscow's use of subversive force and encourage changes within the Soviet bloc that will lead to a more peaceful world order;
5. To prevent the transfer of militarily critical technology and knowledge to the Soviet bloc and to other potential adversaries;
6. To pursue equitable and verifiable arms reduction agreements, with special emphasis on compliance;
7. To defend and advance the cause of democracy, freedom and human rights throughout the world.¹¹

In order to develop appropriate military objectives in consonance with the other elements of national power (political, economic, and informational), the U.S. has maintained a traditional perspective that military objectives invariably call for the use of combat power. JCS Pub 2, however, requires that all the military services have forces organized, trained and equipped to "prosecute operations in war and operations short of war."¹²

For the United States, the difference between operations in war and operations short of war lies in the way its military force is applied. In war, military resources are the dominant instrument for pursuit of national political objectives and are employed directly to destroy the

enemy's military power and establish the conditions under which the national strategic aim can be realized. In operations short of war, the armed forces support the political, economic, and informational instruments of national power which are the primary means by which the strategic aim is realized.

The Army, by virtue of its capability to establish and maintain control over land must have the capability to operate across the spectrum of conflict as shown on chart three.¹³ Army Chief of Staff, General Carl Vuono described the impact of the American soldier as. "Our clearest, most valued symbol of resolve."¹⁴ In a dynamic international environment, this capability provides a hedge against uncertainty and a range of choices in foreign policy: from negotiating treaties to establishing alliances for mutual security. In war, Army forces must be trained, organized and available to "...defeat the enemy's military forces and crush his will to continue waging war."¹⁵ In operations short of war, the Army's range of missions could, "involve peacekeeping operations, foreign internal defense, terrorism counteraction, and military operations to protect high value areas or to defeat hostile forces."¹⁶

America's record of success in her first battles is not impressive. In the ten "first battles" the U.S. Army experienced in nine wars, it suffered five defeats, four costly victories and only one clear victory.¹⁷ Moreover, the few first victories resulted from the courage and sacrifice of individual American soldiers, despite deficiencies in command and control and training which focused on the wrong enemy. In 1933, General Douglas MacArthur observed in a report to the U.S. Army

Chief of Staff, "...in no other profession are the penalties for employing untrained personnel so appalling or so irrevocable as in the military."¹⁸ General Vuono summarized the importance of a properly trained Army today, when he said, "Clearly, we have learned a key lesson of history -- that poorly trained armies invite attack by enemies, incur casualties needlessly and ultimately suffer defeat."¹⁹ With the tremendous emphasis placed by the U.S. Army on training to fight the next war in Central Europe, one might ask if it is like France prior to World War II, training to fight the last war rather than the next one.

III Army Involvement in Low Intensity Conflict

We must hold our minds alert and receptive to the application of unglimsped methods and weapons. The next war will be won in the future, not the past. We must go on, or we will go under.²⁰

General Douglas MacArthur
Speech to the U.S. Congress, 1983

There is no question that the U.S. Army should maintain a credible force to meet its NATO commitments in Central Europe. In doing so, the Army is following U.S. law and Department of Defense guidance. However, to do that and to ignore operations short of war would be an abdication of responsibility and national trust. The prevailing assumption is that such operations can be handled as a planning responsibility and as an additional contingency for those forces prepared for commitment to a major European war.

As demonstrated by the Korean and Vietnamese Wars, the Army, has little latitude in deciding where and when it fights. Thus, it seems that as much effort should be focused on the most likely conflict as on the most dangerous one.

Clausewitz defines war as, "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will."²¹ Taken in that context, armed conflict is only a means to a political end without which war becomes, "...pointless and devoid of sense."²² He repeatedly states that, "war is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means."²³ The close interplay between politics and military affairs suggests that war is an equal responsibility of the government, armed services, and the people. The government establishes the political purpose, the military provides the means for achieving the political end, and the people provide the will.

All three are indispensable elements of the theoretical triad. Clausewitz claimed that, "A theory that ignores any one of them or seeks to fix an arbitrary relationship between them would conflict with reality to such an extent that for this reason alone it would be totally useless."²⁴

While this is relatively clear when applied to conventional war, it is much less so for what is termed 'Operations Short of War'. To the U.S. Army, the term implies, involvement in low intensity conflicts. Army Field Manual 100-20 defines low intensity conflict as follows:

...a politico-military confrontation between contending states or groups below conventional war and above the routine, peaceful competition among states. It frequently involves protracted struggles of competing principles and ideologies. Low intensity conflict ranges from subversion to the use of armed force. It is waged by a combination of means, employing political, economic, informational, and military instruments. Low intensity conflicts are often localized, generally in the Third World, but contain regional and global security implications.²⁵

Thus, low intensity conflict involves operations or activities that have a significance for U.S. interests and includes elements of armed conflict. Col Richard Taylor, in an article entitled, "What are these things called Operations Short of War?", emphasized that military operations short of war do not mean business as usual. Such operations are of necessity, interdepartmental political, economic, and informational actions. When these operations are supported by military means they fall into the category of military operations short of war. Military operations of this type include low intensity conflict as well as security assistance, humanitarian aid, peacekeeping operations, foreign internal defense, peacetime contingency operations, and counterterrorism operations.

Colonel Taylor proposed some useful descriptions of the various environments which characterize routine, peaceful competition, operations short of war, and war itself. These descriptions have particular utility in establishing the base from which the training challenge posed by the U.S. Army mission, 'to prepare to conduct operations short of war', can be more clearly defined. Those environments are summarized as follows:

1. Routine, peaceful competition -- Interests are contested; the military is employed primarily for its political, economic and informational effect; military violence is employed indirectly or limited by time and objective.

2. Low intensity conflict -- Interests are contested; organized violence is used to effect or influence outcomes; all elements of national power are employed; the military dimension is employed primarily for its political, economic and informational effect; military violence is employed indirectly or limited by time and objective.

3. War -- Interests are contested; organized violence is used to effect outcomes; all elements of national power are employed; the military dimension is used to establish conditions under which the strategic aim can be realized; other elements are employed to contribute to military effects.²⁶

Since World War II, the U.S. Army has been largely configured, trained, and otherwise optimized to fight on the European battlefield. However, the more likely U.S. Army missions cannot be adequately carried out by firepower intensive, armor/mechanized heavy forces designed for a European oriented war.

There is no denying the need for the U.S. Army as a member of the NATO Alliance where it serves as a credible, strategic deterrent land force against any Soviet/Warsaw Pact incursion. However, it must be understood that "...successful campaigns...may be worthy of academic analysis of operational art, but they contribute little to winning wars if they are not integrated into a strategy that is aimed at solving the real strategic problem."²⁷ There is ample evidence to suggest that the strategic equation has another important factor other than Central Europe. "Nearly all the armed conflicts of the past forty years have occurred in what is vaguely referred to as the Third World: the diverse countries of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and the Eastern Caribbean. In the same period, all the wars in which the United States was involved--either directly with its combat forces or indirectly with military assistance--occurred in the Third World."²⁸

Dr. William J. Olson, Director of the Low Intensity Conflict Organization in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, summarized the U.S. strategic challenge effectively when he said, "While regular forces are very well prepared to meet challenges at the mid-intensity level of conflict and above, their very preparations and the associated habits of mind do not make them equally prepared to cope with Low intensity conflict, where combat and the employment of major forces may not be required."²⁹ Clearly then, the U.S. Army must develop an understanding of the nature of low intensity conflict operations in the Third World and train its forces to operate effectively in it.

IV

Low Intensity Conflict in the Caribbean Basin

The risk of having to fight on two fronts, and the even greater risk of finding one's retreat cut off, tend to paralyze movement and the ability to resist, and so affect the balance between victory and defeat. What is more, in the case of defeat, they increase the losses and can raise them to their very limit - annihilation. A threat to the rear can, therefore, make a defeat more probable, as well as more decisive.³⁰

Carl Von Clausewitz
On War

The Caribbean Basin and Central America are at the very focal point of the classic East-West struggle. A struggle which by its nature and proximity makes the U.S. Army the military instrument to secure U.S. national interests there. The Soviet Union understands the importance of not having to fight on two fronts, while the United States does not seem to appreciate the nature of the struggle that is real today in its rear area. While the U.S. Army dutifully builds up its heavy arsenal in Central Europe--an effort in any measure, inadequate to win against the massive array of Soviet Forces without resorting to nuclear weapons--the Soviets are steadily taking advantage of neglect in the Caribbean Basin in general and in Central America in particular.

The potential impact of a hostile Central America and Caribbean Basin in a general war is all but ignored in favor of the logistical and management challenge of moving large forces and sustainment to Europe in the event of war. The fact is that without the nuclear deterrent the U.S. Army in Europe would be irrelevant and without a friendly or at least neutral Central America-Caribbean Basin, any hope of waging a conventional war in Europe would be doomed. In fact, the U.S. Army could conceivably find itself having to deploy forces to protect the Southern border of the United States while fighting a general war in

Europe. Thus, it is essentially a question of the United States devoting resources, including the U.S. Army, to secure the nation's southern flank now, or risking paralysis by having to fight on two fronts at the Soviet's option. To secure the flank now, expenditures would be small in comparison to the cost of irrelevant exercises to reinforce Europe. They would be less costly and less risky now than attempting to secure it in war.

The United States may be at peace, but much of the world south of its borders is not. Some of the conflicts are internal or involve traditional territorial rivalries not directly affecting U.S. security interests. However, where American national interests are in jeopardy, the U.S. Army is not prepared to protect them. It has been said that the "U.S. defense capability is analogous to a medical capability to treat only serious diseases, with no preventive medical program."³¹

Central America, and indeed all of Latin America, has increasingly become an area of strategic opportunity for the Soviet Union. This situation occurred not only as a result of U.S. strategic and diplomatic neglect, but because of several regional factors including the continuing frailty of social and political arrangements, the presence of Communist governments in Cuba and Nicaragua, and the continuing wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua. The situation is compounded further by continuing economic and debt servicing problems, the ongoing problem of the illegal drug trade, and the growing political strength of the drug traders. In fact, the drug traders, often in collusion with local guerrilla groups, have begun to pose serious challenges for the emerging democracies of the region.³²

The terrain itself appears to have been a major factor in the development of the social-political-economic structure typical throughout the region. Dr. Marvin Gordon describes this factor well in an article entitled, "The Geopolitics of the Caribbean Basin" as follows:

"A large portion of the region is dominated by steep slopes. This mountain and hill country tends to restrict settlement, economic development, circulation and acculturation. Indeed, it has been referred to as a 'Balkanized' region because the dominance of sloping terrain has tended to fragment the area socioeconomically as well as politically."³³

For a number of reasons, all of which appear to stem from a general awakening of masses of people to the fact that a better life exists and that they may be able to influence their own plight, there has been a steady drift toward political and economic democracy throughout the area. As recently as 1976, military governments and dictatorships were the rule in Central America. With the exception of Panama, military governments have disappeared. However, a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship does rule in Nicaragua. The United States has played a major role in the rise of democracy both as an example and through direct encouragement of the national structures themselves. In 1813, President Thomas Jefferson, wrote, "The example of the United States would be an excitement as well as a model for their (Latin America) direction."³⁴

The evolution to civilian democratic governments, unfortunately has not been accompanied by corresponding growth and development in the social and economic sectors. Leaders of Central American countries have been unanimous in their emphasis that political democracy cannot endure without the supporting social and economic development.

The second major reason for unrest in the region is foreign interference. Since President James Monroe declared that the Western Hemisphere was no longer open to colonization, there has been a steady decolonization of the area by European powers. Unfortunately, Central American hopes of imitating the U.S. democracy were unfulfilled in every case except for Costa Rica. Equally unfortunate were the general actions of the United States which often supported the wealthy landowners and the status quo at worst and slow change at best. This identification with the established structure, which was often oppressive, produced a fear of U.S. influence. In the period after the Korean War, the Soviet Union hastened to exploit this fear at every opportunity.

"The strategic goal of the Soviet Union is to force the United States to divert political attention and military resources to its critical southern flank, and away from areas of the world of vital concern to the Soviets."³⁵ The region is significant to Soviet strategic calculations because by tying down the United States in the defense of its own 'back yard,' it gains for the Soviet Union greater freedom of action in the Eastern Hemisphere. B. H. Liddell Hart's comparison of an army to a human being applies to the Soviet strategy against the U.S. in Central America:

An army, like a man, cannot properly defend its back from a blow without turning round to use its arms in the new direction. 'Turning' temporarily unbalances an army as it does a man, and with the former the period of instability is inevitably much longer.³⁶

Soviet support for armed struggle, so-called "wars of liberation", forces the United States to divert scarce resources from critical global obligations to counter the threat.

A second objective of the Soviet Union is to loosen the economic, social, political, and military ties between Central American countries and the United States, thus eroding American influence in the area. In the 1960s, the Soviets had diplomatic relations with only three countries in all of Latin America (Argentina, Mexico, and Uruguay). By 1980, the Soviets had ties with 18 Latin American governments. It had established Marxist-Leninist regimes in Cuba and, for the first time on the North American continent, in Nicaragua. These surrogate regimes serve as local conduits for Soviet arms and assistance to insurgent movements throughout the region.³⁷

The most important U.S. interest in Central America is insuring access to the Panama Canal and to the the shipping lanes of the Caribbean Sea. The Panama Canal is important for its strategic location. It is also important for symbolic reasons as well as providing quick access between the two oceans which border the American east and west coasts. Until the U.S. has a two-ocean navy, the Panama Canal will be significant to U.S. defense efforts, in particular, its power projection capability. The Canal also reduces the time required for shipping supplies and reinforcements. Economically, it is important to America because two-thirds of the U.S. imported oil, many strategic minerals, and nearly half of other U.S. trade passes through the Panama Canal and/or the area of the Caribbean Basin. While it is important to the U.S., the Panama Canal may even be more important to the other

nations of the region for access to markets for their goods. The Caribbean shipping lanes have a similar importance because of the amount of military/economic shipping that passes through them. Significantly, to support a war in Western Europe, more than half of the U.S. reinforcements and resupply must pass through the Caribbean area. It is therefore, vitally important that the Panama Canal remain neutral, secure, and accessible to all nations. The U.S. in particular, must have access to the Caribbean shipping lanes and airspace of the region. Chart Four shows the significance of the Caribbean Basin to U.S. military and economic security.

Thus, Central America finds itself at the focal point of the East-West struggle. "Moscow refers to the Central America-Caribbean area as the United States' 'Strategic Rear' for very obvious reasons."³⁹ The challenge to the U.S. is to be a positive catalyst to the growth and spread of democracies and to accelerate the social and economic benefits to the people of Central America. To accomplish the task, the Reagan Administration has outlined six basic propositions to guide its actions in the Third World, all of which apply to Central America:

1. U.S. forces will not, in general, be combatants. A combat role for U.S. forces is viewed as an exceptional event. The principal military role will be to augment security assistance teams.

2. The U.S. should actively support anti-Communist insurgencies.

3. Security assistance requires new legislation and more resources. U.S. foreign aid programs to assist American friends and allies in reducing the underlying causes of instability have proven inadequate and inflexible.

4. The U.S. needs to work with its Third World allies at developing 'cooperative forces'. The U.S. is at a competitive disadvantage in this area because Soviet client states are dictatorships and can secretly order aid missions and military units abroad and disguise their intentions while there.

5. In the Third World, no less than in developed countries, U.S. strategy should seek to maximize its technological advantage. Advanced technologies for training will offer more effective ways to help allies cope with terrorism and insurgency.

6. The U.S. must develop alternatives to overseas bases. It is politically costly and increasingly difficult to maintain bases where satellites and aircraft can perform intelligence and communications functions.⁴⁰

Now that the basis for the East-West struggle as focused in Central America-Caribbean Basin has been outlined, it will be useful to review the methods Soviets and their surrogates are using to exploit the opportunities available to them.

V

The Insurgent Model in Central America

War should never be thought of as something autonomous, but always as an instrument of policy. Wars must vary with the nature of their motives and the situations which give rise to them.

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into something that is alien to its nature.⁴¹

Carl Von Clausewitz
On War

In order for the U.S. Army to alter its conventional fixation on firepower-attrition and to develop an effective training strategy for its forces operating in low intensity conflict, it is necessary to understand the nature of the conflict generated by the insurgent. The Cuban revolution is particularly important, as its guerrilla example became the most important model for Latin American insurgencies. With U.S. assistance, other Latin American countries were able to make necessary changes in their structure to prevent Cuba's revolution from being imported. However, significant changes have occurred which cause it to remain relevant. Each time the Communist revolutionaries failed, they learned important lessons which made them increasingly effective in subsequent attempts.

As a result of the U.S. defeat in Vietnam and the subsequent refocusing of American attention toward Europe, the Soviets have been able to increase their training and logistical support of revolutions in Central America. The result has been the installation of a Communist government for the first time on the North American continent. The American response, led by the U.S. Army has been to provide military assistance to embattled allies reminiscent of the support provided the Army of South Vietnam. Much of the inappropriate U.S. Army training and

support stems from a lack of understanding of the nature of the threat. The result is often allied armies performing little better against guerrillas than the one Castro defeated in Cuba.

The Cuban revolution laid the groundwork for what has become known as the FOCO theory of revolution. This theory emphasizes revolutionary cadres as the focus of revolutionary struggle, with guerrilla warfare taking precedence over political organization.

Castro did not follow the traditional Communist (Marxist-Leninist) revolutionary doctrine in leading the Cuban revolution. Recognized Leninist theory calls for a revolutionary political party to lead urban workers, radicalized students, and disaffected soldiers against the government. Maoist theory calls for a protracted struggle in the rural regions of a country, with a dual revolutionary structure of a political organization and a guerrilla cadre. In both doctrines, political agitators and organizers are central, leading the way with extensive propaganda and mass mobilization. Mao Tse-Tung summarized the importance he placed on political power and its relationship to the fighting force when he said,

"When the Red Army fights, it fights not merely for the sake of fighting, but to agitate the masses, to organize them and to help them establish revolutionary political power; apart from such objectives, fighting loses its meaning and the Red Army, the reason for its existence."⁴²

The Cuban revolution was primarily a military affair with armed guerrillas leading the struggle with little political party development. Although Castro's forces operated in the countryside for most of the campaign, the struggle was by no means protracted. In fact, it was concluded in the relatively short period of three years after Castro and

his small group of revolutionaries returned in November 1956, from exile in Mexico.

On the surface, the situation in Cuba was highly unfavorable for revolutionaries. Cuba was one of the more highly developed countries of Latin America and enjoyed a developed relationship with U.S. business interests. The Army was well armed and its government was fully supported by the United States government.⁴³

Castro managed to turn the Cuban government's strengths to his advantage. He was able to establish a secure base of operations in the mountains soon after he and his guerrilla cadre were driven there by government forces. From his base, Castro launched raid and ambush attacks on government forces throughout the country. Government military aircraft never had fixed targets and often bombed empty jungle or civilians. Frustrated government troops overreacted to the threat, used their firepower indiscriminately, and arrested anyone in the cities suspected of supporting the rebel force. Thus, many otherwise apathetic Cuban people were pushed into supporting the revolution to gain vengeance on the government. As Castro's strength grew, from the rural populace joining the revolution, the government forces became increasingly demoralized and isolated from the countryside.⁴⁴

As government repression increased, the Catholic Church turned against it in protest over the killing of innocent civilians. Later, the Middle Class, who were fed up with government corruption and inefficiency, joined the rebels. They believed that Castro, who was not at that time a proclaimed Communist, might actually be able to improve Cuban society. Additionally, nationalist sentiment was aroused by the

close partnership of the government and U.S. corporations. It became increasingly clear that the government had lost its legitimacy in terms of the support of its people. The final straw was broken when the U.S. government withdrew its support. A successful propaganda campaign within the United States, convinced the American government that it would be in its best interest to cease its military and diplomatic backing of a corrupt dictatorship. In January 1959, Castro and his revolutionaries marched into Havana as victors.⁴⁵

Revolutionaries throughout Latin America trained in FOCO revolution doctrine in Cuba. One of the Cuban revolutionary leaders, Che Guevara, wrote, "One does not necessarily have to wait for a revolutionary situation to arise, it can be created."⁴⁶ Cuban inspired revolutionaries were active in attempting to export the Cuban revolution throughout Latin America, but all were defeated within a space of a few years. Che Guevara, himself, was killed by U.S. trained Bolivian counterinsurgency forces. However, Cuba remained "... an important inspiration and source of support for many Latin American countries and ...is likely to continue for the foreseeable future..."⁴⁷ An analysis of those attempts at revolution reveals several significant differences in the conditions present in those Latin American countries, but absent in the Cuban experience. Each has important implications toward a training strategy to counter such revolutions.

Castro, prior to assuming power, was not publicly identified as a Communist. This fact was significant in his being able to gain the support of the Middle and Upper Class elements who were traditionally anti-Communist. However, when following the successful Cuban

revolution, revolutionaries became openly identified as Communist, the Middle and Upper Classes refused to support them.⁴⁸

Latin American governments in general had awakened to the Cuban inspired revolutionary threat and viewed the Cuban experience as a warning. They reorganized and trained their security forces to deal with unconventional revolutionaries. They were also increasingly willing to conduct social and political reforms to eliminate exploitable sources of discontent.⁴⁹

The revolutionary cadre themselves became a liability to the revolution. Many were from an urban background and found that both they and their textbook Marxist solutions to grievances were alien to the peasantry. Many did not even speak the language of the local people. Local Indians, who were extremely conservative and fatalistic, were simply unwilling to support radically militant actions. Additionally, the cadre found that living off the land was physically debilitating.⁵⁰

Finally, the FOCO theory itself, led to rifts within the Communist movement. The subordination of political parties to military leaders alienated orthodox Marxists. Weak political infrastructure resulted in an abandonment of the Communist organization's principal weapons of agitation and propaganda. The ultimate result was a failure to mobilize popular support.

As the rural FOCO insurgencies were steadily defeated in the 1960s, a new set of revolutionaries began to shift emphasis from the countryside to the cities, from cadres to political undergrounds, from guerrilla warfare to political agitation, civil disturbances, and terrorism. The shift to the cities reflected demographic developments

throughout Latin America. In many countries, the majority of the population lived in the cities. According to the revolutionary theorists, the cities had become the centers of power, wealth, and ideas. In the cities, large groups of discontented people could be found in the ranks of workers, students, and the unemployed.⁵¹

All revolutionary operations were to be planned for their political effect. Rather than destroy the government's security forces, the objective now was to destroy its political foundations. Traditional military thinking was based on controlling terrain while revolutionary warfare was based on controlling popular will. The superior firepower of a conventional armed force is of little value against an underground movement operating among the people. Thus, guerrilla warfare creates a strange paradox in history, "That of a strong, well-equipped, well-trained army being unable to cope with an irregular force which may sometimes be composed almost entirely of poorly-equipped civilians with little, if any, regular military training."⁵²

The new revolutionary objective increasingly polarized society, forcing the government into using repressive measures which would alienate the people. Government overreaction would provide recruits from innocent victims of government repression and violence. The ultimate objective was to force the government into adopting dictatorial methods such as suspending civil liberties and calling in military rule. Revolutionaries believed that this would cause the Middle Class to defect from the government's side. At this point, the government would collapse and the revolutionaries would seize power.

Again, the revolutionaries failed, even against repressive military regimes which the guerrillas thought would lead to mass popular support for the revolution. The military governments succeeded for several reasons, but the most significant was that the guerrillas lacked popular support. Indeed, according to Mao Tse-Tung's principle, "...guerrilla fish can survive only in a friendly sea..."⁵³ Revolutionary violence alienated the people from the guerrillas and led to popular demand for the government to take drastic measures to stop it. The resulting military governments implemented economic and industrial policies which improved social conditions. Thus, the military, rather than the revolutionaries came to be identified with change, progress, and freedom from corruption.

The 1970s saw several developments which gave new life to revolutionary doctrine in Central America. The U.S. defeat in Vietnam was followed by a period of retreat in which the U.S. demonstrated a reluctance to become involved in foreign wars or support its interests abroad. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, became more willing to support revolutionary operations abroad and fill the vacuum left by the U.S..⁵⁴

Several other changes were emerging which were to have a major impact. The first of these was the emergence of a new revolutionary leadership. A leadership that had studied the lessons from the failures of the FOCO and urban revolutions and was determined not to repeat them. Second, the rise of Liberation Theology, in which many theologians identified Christianity with the Marxist revolutionary struggle as a means of obtaining social justice and equality. This conversion of one

of the mainstays of the established order in Central America, into one of the most ardent advocates of revolution permitted exploitation of virtually every segment of society by the revolutionaries.⁵⁵

The most dramatic result of this new approach was the overthrow of the Somoza government and assumption of power in Nicaragua by the Sandinista revolutionaries in 1979. The Nicaraguan revolutionaries had progressed through all the previously unsuccessful attempts at revolution--FGCO and urban revolutionary strategy--but ultimately settled on a mass based movement along Marxist-Leninist lines. The emphasis was on political organization and establishment of a broad front of opposition groups. The fact that the revolution was organized and directed by Communists was concealed. This enabled the revolutionaries to enlist non-Communist guerrilla leaders and Catholic Church groups as well as much of the Middle Class against the Somoza government.⁵⁶ An effective propaganda campaign capitalized on the U.S. government's human rights emphasis. The result was a cut-off of American military assistance and diplomatic isolation of the government. As the government security forces found themselves increasingly isolated and under attack, even from rebels who were not even a part of the Sandinista movement, they became even more ruthless and repressive. This, in turn, led to an ever increasing spiral of popular opposition to the government. Add to this, the massive influx of Cuban military assistance to the Sandinistas prior to the final offensive and the result was a security force collapse followed by victory for the Sandinistas.⁵⁷

An analysis of the successes and failures of the counterrevolutionary forces in their fight against insurgencies can be expected to yield useful insights into the type training strategy and mindset such a force should have in order to win. This, in the context of U.S. assistance programs, can also be expected to provide important implications for U.S. Army involvement in countering insurgencies in Central America.

VI
Training to Combat Insurgency

Our supreme tactical principle therefore is Mobility...Mobility is aided by surprise, by the independence of the subordinate commander within the mission of the higher unit, and what we call tactics by mission...Mobility means quick decisions, quick movements, surprise attacks with concentrated force: to do always what the enemy does not expect, and to constantly change both the means and methods and to do the most improbable thing whenever the situation permits; it means to be free of all set rules and preconceived ideas. We believe that no leader who thinks or acts by stereotyped rules can ever do anything great because he is bound by such rules...War is not normal...We do not want therefore any stereotyped solutions for battle, but an understanding of the nature of war.⁵⁸

Captain(WWII General) Von Bechtolsheim
Lecture at Fort Sill in 1931

The U.S. Army has had considerable experience in counterinsurgency operations in its two hundred year history. This experience has produced both positive and negative lessons in the struggle to find the right combination of strategy and tactics that is both successful and palatable to the American people. In 1983, Lieutenant General Wallace H. Nutting summed up the U.S. Army dilemma at formulating a strategy to operate in low intensity conflict when he said, "As a nation we don't understand it and as a government we are not prepared to deal with it."⁵⁹

In the Second Seminole War, the U.S. Army achieved success in 1842 only after it abandoned the strategic objective of seeking a decisive battle to destroy the Seminole means to resist in favor of destruction of their base of support and will to fight. In the Philippines after the Spanish American War, the Army succeeded only after it developed a strategy which allowed unity of command and a central focus for economic, political and military action designed to

achieve well-defined goals. The counter guerrilla operations practiced then were subsequently employed by General John J. Pershing in his campaign against the Moros on Mindanao in 1908. "In the final analysis, ironically perhaps, the greatest significance of the American Army's Philippine experience might still be as an example of a successful pacification campaign."⁶⁰ Thus, in its domestic and colonial experience, the U.S. Army perfected the strategies and tactics of Low intensity conflict. After the success of Castro's revolution in Cuba, the U.S. Army systematically imparted that experience to friendly Latin American governments. The results were positive and the Communist threat was essentially contained on the island of Cuba.

With the U.S. Army in Vietnam the situation was different. At the height of the war, it was able to move nearly a million men in and out of the theater and sustain them to an unprecedented standard. In engagement after engagement the forces of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army were beaten with enormous losses. Yet, in the end it was not the United States, but North Vietnam that emerged as the victor. Colonel Harry Summers, in his book, On Strategy. The Vietnam War in Context, advances the concept that the U.S. Army confused the two major activities characteristic of war. Clausewitz defines these activities as those that are merely preparation for war and those that are war. All that is required of the first group is the training and equipping of fighting forces. The second group is concerned with the use of those means once they have been developed, for purposes of war. "If the Army is, as some would have it, merely a logistics and management system

designed to organize, train, and equip active duty and reserve forces, it was an unqualified success."⁶¹

If the U.S. Army is to succeed in combating Communist insurgencies, it has to learn from its mistakes in Vietnam as well as from its previous success. The lesson seems clear. For an Army to be successful, it must operate as one element in the range of necessary economic, social, political, and military activities in low intensity conflict. It must adopt a strategy and supporting tactics that are designed to place the guerrilla on the defensive, destroy his base of support, and ultimately his will to fight.

To win the initiative from the guerrilla, the Army must think, act, and fight as a guerrilla. Castro's forces easily defeated a guerrilla uprising shortly after capturing the government because his forces were trained in guerrilla warfare. Small unit saturation patrolling and ambushing by small units of lightly armed, highly footmobile teams is essential to deny the guerrilla rest and freedom of movement. These teams must be able to operate without a fixed base and be capable of simultaneously harassing the insurgents and politicizing the civilian population. The leadership of the counterinsurgency teams must be schooled in human rights doctrine and be capable of enforcing it in their forces. Such a strategy would in effect attack the guerrillas from the rear and transfer the advantages of better intelligence, surprise, and local initiative to the government Army.

Unfortunately, much of the U.S. Army military training and assistance is measured in terms of capital items such as helicopters, artillery, and fixed wing aircraft which have tremendous utility in a

Central European battlefield. This, combined with a military mindset aimed at firepower attrition of a Soviet second echelon tank army, is inappropriate in combating insurgent revolutionaries. Such emphasis on capital items reinforce an Army's predilection for spending too much time in comfortable barracks. The tendency is to rely on short reaction operations rather than staying in the countryside and denying the guerrilla time and space in which to train his cadre and to politicize the civilians. Helicopters and gunships transform elite soldiers into reaction forces rather than using their offensive capability to place the enemy on the defensive. Gunships and heavy artillery encourage commanders to stay close to their bases and rely on firepower for defense rather than on aggressive patrolling and ambush in depth. U.S. supplied airborne intelligence can undermine a host country politically by providing targets for firepower that cannot distinguish between guerrillas and civilians. If firepower forces civilians out of a rural area, the government is faced with increased financial and logistical burdens which if not met, generates political dissatisfaction and strengthens the insurgent's political position.

In short, emphasis on firepower, reaction, and attrition enables a major objective of a guerrilla force to be achieved. An objective of insurgents is to fix government forces in bases from which their movements are easily observed and avoided. Knowing the government forces do not operate for extended periods away from their bases, guerrillas simply wait until they depart to regain control over the countryside and the civilians. An effective strategy places government forces permanently in the countryside, thereby denying the guerrilla

freedom of movement and support. U.S. Army assistance programs should encourage this offensive, mobile strategy by providing small arms, lightweight, portable communications, and those soldier items which enhance individual mobility away from fixed bases. U.S. Army forces involved in low intensity conflict operations must be expert at small unit operations, light weapons, communications, and intelligence gathering. They must be well informed about the nature of the enemy they are encountering. When in an advisory role, he must understand and demonstrate the important interface of social, political, economic, and military elements at the lowest possible level. When U.S. Army units are involved in a supporting role or in a combat role such as combatting guerrilla main force units or units of a neighboring hostile state, the leaders at every level must understand the nature, context, and objectives of the operation. The philosophy of Sun Tzu applies:

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.⁶²

The first element in a low intensity conflict training strategy is to ensure Army leaders are instructed at every level in the nature of such conflict as well as its relationship to the strategy designed to achieve U.S. national objectives. Because of the probability of occurrence, equal amounts of emphasis should be given to operations short of war and operations in war. Small unit leadership application is the same in either, but the context is much less so. Whether in an advisory or supporting role in low intensity conflict, the emphasis must

be on the development of what General John A. Wickham Jr. termed "Soldier Power". This emphasis on the bottom up "...is developed through thorough, rigorous training, physical and mental toughness, excellence in basic infantry skills, and competent, resourceful leadership."63

The second element in training for low intensity conflict operations is to ensure Army leaders at every level are familiar with the guerrilla mindset and are instructed in the basics of what constitutes the will to fight. U.S. Army leaders at every level must be able to apply guerrilla principles across the spectrum of conflict.

Only when the U.S. Army school system for leaders cease its institutional bias toward being able to win the last war in Europe -- again at the expense of the immediate danger to America from South of the border, will the U.S. Army have effective training for operations in low intensity conflict. Training leaders is the key as prejudices and institutional bias against such noncapital equipment oriented training as Airborne, Ranger, Special Forces, and Light Infantry are passed on at that level.

Training an Army to operate in a low intensity environment does not require a separate training doctrine to allow for the forward deployed forces. The mindset necessary to operate effectively in all kinds of combat is one which focuses on mobility and surprise. Leaders with this mindset 'conduct surprise attacks with concentrated force', does 'what the enemy does not expect', and constantly 'changes both the means and methods to do the most improbable thing whenever the situation permits'.

VII Conclusion

Out of the Army's long and varied service to our nation, tested and tempered through 200 years of peace and war, have emerged certain fundamental roles, principles and precepts which underlie the more transitory military organizations strategies, tactics and technologies...They constitute the Army's anchor in history, law and custom, suggesting the sources of its present strength and of the trust and confidence of the nation in the essential role of the Army.⁶⁴

General Bernard W. Rogers
Chief of Staff, U.S. Army 1978

This paper contains some rather harsh criticism about the U.S. Army capability to effectively operate and assist allies in low intensity conflict operations. It was intended to be so, but not out of a desire to bash the Army because the criticism is by no means universal. The Army has made tremendous gains in improving its capability in general. Specifically, the addition of Light Infantry Divisions to the force structure, the increase in Ranger and Airborne units for a greater forced entry, strike capability, and the increase in Special Forces Groups which specialize in Foreign Internal Defense.

While much of the concern about national interests, objectives and strategy is the province of the State Department, the U.S. Army must not be uninvolved. Its mission is clear, to prepare for war and operations short of war. While the Army has devoted some attention to low intensity conflict, it is clear that preparation for war in Central Europe is the dominant priority. The firepower, attrition oriented mindset necessary in Europe to delay the decision to use nuclear weapons does not work in combatting insurgency.

The battle for America's rear area is taking place today in Central America. Some of our leaders have recognized this and steps have been

taken in an attempt to stabilize the area. However, the very mindset instilled in the leadership of the Army through its school system leads to an attempt to solve the problem by large scale capital items which tend to handicap U.S. allies and lead to their slow strangulation and ultimate failure as in South Vietnam.

The U.S. Army is not lacking in example and experience in how to successfully combat insurgencies. In fact, it was successful in exporting that expertise to American allies until it was traumatized by failure in Vietnam. The U.S. Army then focused its efforts on Central Europe where its management expertise and firepower intensive organization could be justified. Unfortunately, in the process it relegated operations short of war and the forces traditionally operating there to the fringes of the institution.

The Soviets have been quick to take advantage of opportunities in Central America to position itself to harass America's flank. The Cuban revolutionary insurgent example has been constantly improved with the result being an entrenched Marxist government on the North American continent. The alternatives are clear, continue to focus scarce training and resources on Central Europe where there can never be adequate numbers available to preclude the use of nuclear weapons or to refocus training and resources to assisting allies in combatting insurgencies. The consequence of the wrong choice now will be considerably more costly in terms of manpower and resources necessary to defend the U.S southern border later.

The price of preparing for the wrong war has historically been high for a nation. For an Army it has been defeat. Nor is it satisfactory

for the U.S. Army to lament as illustrated by the now famous conversation in Hanoi, April 1975,

"You know you never defeated us on the battlefield," said the American Colonel. The North Vietnamese Colonel pondered this remark a moment. "That may be so," he replied, "but it is also irrelevant."⁶⁵

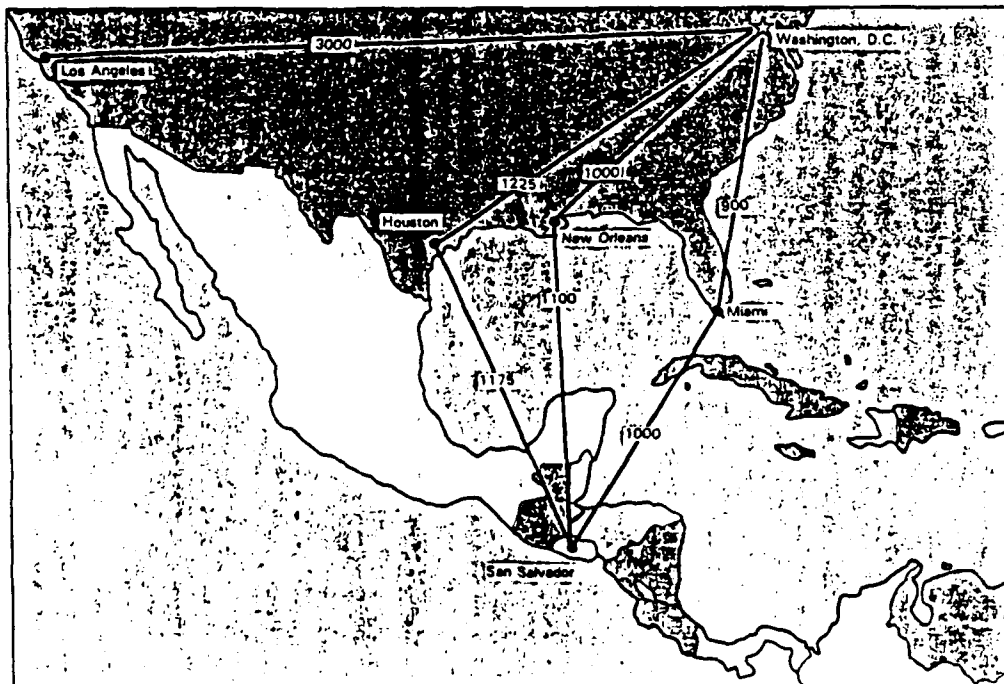
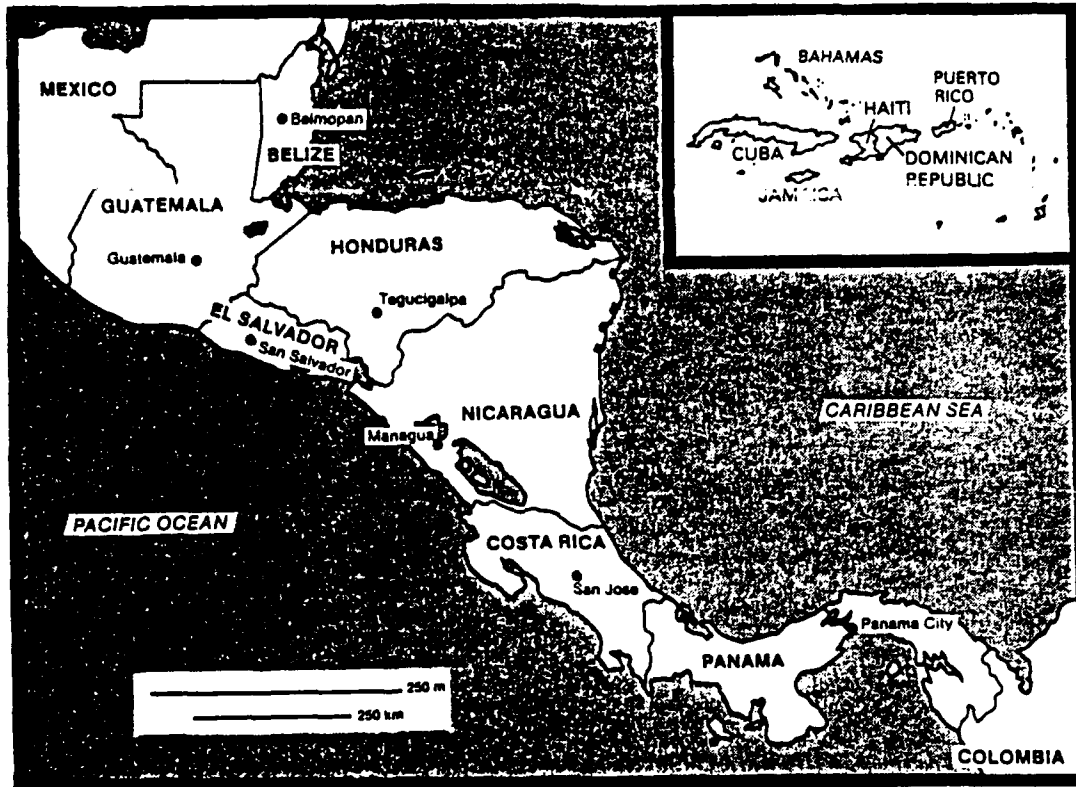
The starting point is in leader education. The Army institutional school system will need to refocus to provide emphasis commensurate with the threat. When it is clear to Army leaders that operations short of war share at least an equal billing with the improbable war in Central Europe without nuclear weapons, the institutional mindset will be easily changed to think mobility and destruction of the enemy's means to resist and his will to fight rather than simply firepower and attrition.



GLOBAL MISSIONS FOR ARMY FORCES

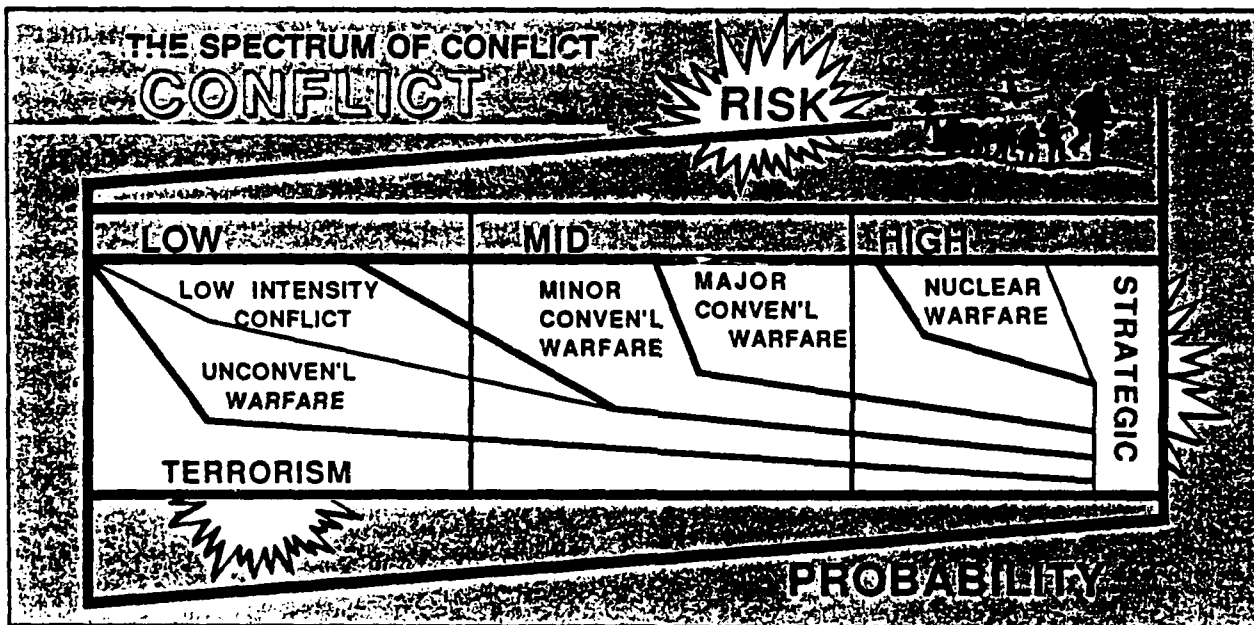
- ☐ DEFEAT A WARSAW PACT ATTACK ON NATO AND MAINTAIN ITS TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND SECURITY;
- ☐ DENY SOVIET CONTROL OF PERSIAN GULF OIL;
- ☐ DEFEND VITAL U.S. INTERESTS IN THE PACIFIC;
- ☐ SUPPORT ALLIES IN ASIA, LATIN AMERICA, AND AFRICA;
- ☐ MAINTAIN, WITH OTHER SERVICES, A STRATEGIC RESERVE CAPABLE OF RESPONDING TO THREATS IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE; AND
- ☐ RESPOND TO OTHER THREATS TO U.S. INTERESTS ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

Central America and the Caribbean
-Locations and Relative Distances

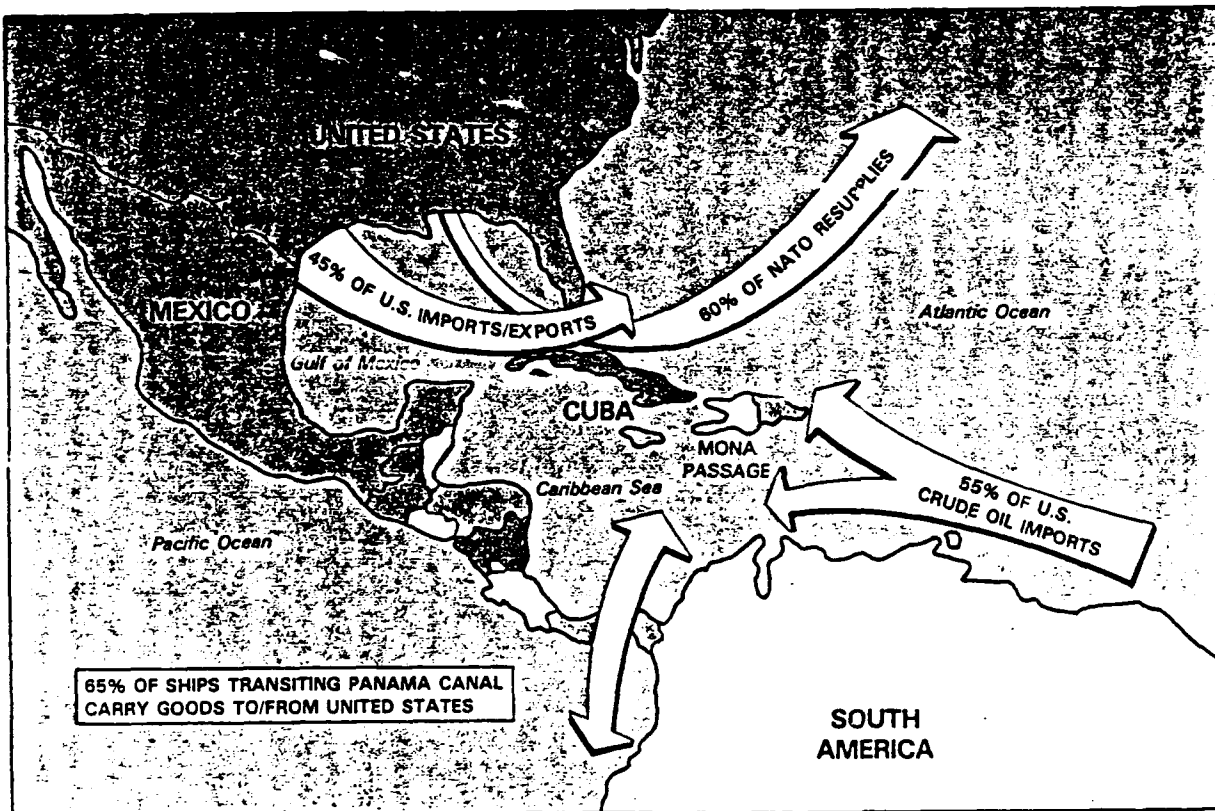


One of the reasons Central America and the Caribbean is so important is the proximity of the region to the southern border of the United States. Notice that San Salvador is about the same distance from Miami as Miami is from Washington, D.C.

The Spectrum of Conflict



Importance of the Caribbean Basin
Economics and Security of the
United States



The sea lanes of the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico are vitally important to the economic well-being and security of the United States. The Soviet Union is attempting to create unrest in this "strategic rear" in order to cause the U.S. to be less able to respond to Soviet challenges elsewhere in the world.

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